

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0591

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L L E N I N G R A D 0 6 1 4

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, US

SUBJECT: REACTION IN LENINGRAD TO PRESIDENT'S VISIT

1. LENINGRAD CIRCLES HAVE BEEN FORTHRIGHT DURING PAST WEEK IN COMMENTING FAVORABLY ON PRESIDENT NIXON'S VISIT, STRESSING COMMON SENSE OF IMPROVING RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD, MUTUAL BENEFIT OF DETENTE, INCREASED PERSONAL CONTACTS BETWEEN TWO NATIONS, ETC. JUDGING BY COMMENTS HERE, U.S.- SOVIET SUMMITRY NOW REGARDED AS ESTABLISHED HARDY PERENNIAL.

2. LENINGRAD PRESS HAS CONTAINED LARGE VOLUME OF MATERIAL ON PRESIDENT'S VISIT SINCE HIS ARRIVAL, REPRINTING ALMOST ALL OF CENTRAL PRESS FEATURES, BUT NOT ALL TEXTS OF SPEECHES. SOVIET OFFICIAL GUESTS AT SOCIAL FUNCTIONS HOSTED BY CONGEN OFFICERS DURING PAST SEVERAL DAYS HAVE GONE OUT OF THEIR WAY TO EMPHASIZE BOTH DESIRABILITY AND APPROPRIATENESS OF TWO GREAT NUCLEAR POWERS FINDING BASIS FOR ON-GOING RELATIONSHIP. AS WITH PRE-VISIT PRESS TREATMENT OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS, PRESIDENT NIXON PERSONALLY EXTOLLED AS PLAYING ESSENTIAL ROLE IN PROCESS OF DETENTE AND ANY MENTION OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES IS USUALLY WITHIN CONTEXT OF CRITICISM OF ANTI-DETENTE FORCES.

3. SOVIET COMMENTARY HERE ON PRESIDENT'S VISIT CLEARLY REFLECTS SENSE OF SOVIET PRIDE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT IN HAVING ARRIVED AT A
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WORLD POSITION WHERE THE OTHER GREAT WORLD POWER TURNS TO U.S.S.R.

AS EQUAL TO SEEK AGREEMENT AND RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES. ON ONE HAND, THERE IS SATISFACTION EXPRESSED THAT BILATERAL CONTACTS HAVE INCREASED TO DEGREE UNIMAGINABLE SOME YEARS AGO; ON OTHER HAND, LENINGRADERS INDULGE IN EXPRESSIONS OF "GREAT POWER EGOTISM" OVER FACT THAT U.S. AND SOVIET LEADERS SIT DOWN TO DISCUSS-- AND, IN LENINGRAD'S EYES, DETERMINE--OUTSTANDING WORLD PROBLEMS AND ISSUES. IF ANYTHING, VIEWS HERE TEND TOWARD BELIEF THAT, THUS LAUNCHED, U.S.-SOVIET COOPERATION AND CONSULTATION DURING CRISES CANNOT HELP BUT CONTINUE EVEN AS THE MUCH-TOUTED OPPONENTS OF DETENTE INTENSIFY THEIR EFFORTS TO FRUSTRATE OR AT LEAST SLOW DOWN PROCESS.

4. SOME SOVIETS SEE GREAT SIGNIFICANCE IN FACT THAT STREET CROWDS ON PATH OF CAVALCADES MUCH HEAVIER THAN DURING 1972 VISIT. AMONG SEVERAL OTHERS, COSMONAUGHT LEONOV MADE THIS OBSERVATION TO CONGEN. THERE IS TENDENCY AMONG LENINGRAD INTELLECTUALS TO REVIVE THEIR ETERNAL HOPES FOR GREATER POSSIBILITIES FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL AND PROGRESSIVE LIBERALIZATION OF PARTY CULTURAL RESTRAINTS.

5. IN SUM, INFORMED LENINGRAD CIRCLES SEE PRESENT U.S.- SOVIET SUMMIT MEETING AS LOGICAL, DESIRABLE, AND PRODUCTIVE. TO EXTENT THAT WE ARE IN POSITION TO JUDGE, BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION WITH SUSTAINED MOMENTUM IN U.S.- SOVIET RELATIONS RECEIVES CREDIT FROM BOTH COMMUNIST ORTHODOX AND PROGRESSIVE SHADES OF OFFICIAL OPINION HERE IN LENINGRAD. THUS, THOSE WHO APPLAUD INCREASED SOVIET-AMERICAN CONTACTS FOR, PERHAPS, MORE IDEALISTIC REASONS FEEL THAT SUMMIT PROVIDES CONFIRMATION OF CONSOLIDATION OF DETENTE. CONVERSELY, THOSE OF STRONG IDEOLOGICAL AND/OR "HARD-LINE" POLITICAL BENT MAY AS WELL SAY THAT SUMMIT REPRESENTS AN ENHANCED SOVIET POSITION OF POWER WHICH CAN IN TURN FURTHER SOVIET OBJECTIVES VIS-A-VIS IMPERIALISM AND ALL OTHER BOGIES. GLEYSTEN

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